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## TO DRINK EISEL.

TO THE EDITORS OF MOD. LANG. NOTES,

SIRS:—Prof. Tolman's paper on *eisel*, *esile*, in *Hamlet* v. i, is correct, and the concluding suggestion: "that the expression *to drink eisel* passed into proverbial use" is close to the mark, especially if for "proverbial" we substitute "common." I have just stumbled upon the use of *eisel* in a book which brings us nearer to Shakespeare's times than do the older church plays. Namely in the *Kalender of Sheperdes*, Sommer's reprint of the London ed. of 1506, vol. iii, p. 156/6: "and than was he nayled on the crosse and late fall in the mortis and than gaue hym eysell and gall to drynke." The *Kalender* was a popular book, appearing in many editions in the sixteenth century. See Sommer, i, p. 57.

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## MERCHANT OF VENICE, II, 2, 11.

TO THE EDITORS OF MOD. LANG. NOTES,

SIRS:—The *Variorum Shakespeare* in a note on *Merchant of Venice*, ii, 2, 11. mentions a rather foolish criticism passed upon the phrase "for the heavens," put by Launcelot Gobbo into the mouth of the fiend; namely, that it is an impropriety. In this connection it seems somewhat singular that no note is made of an almost precisely similar expression which occurs in Cervantes, and in the mouth of a character not wholly unlike Launcelot. In *Don Quixote*, Part ii chap. 34 (Ormsbee's translation, iii, 384), occurs the following:

"By God and upon my conscience" said the devil, "I never observed it, for my mind is occupied with so many different things that I was forgetting the main thing I came about."  
 "This demon must be an honest fellow and a good Christain," said Sañcho, "for if he wasn't he wouldn't swear by God and on his conscience; I feel sure there must be some good souls even in hell itself."

The parallel is obvious.

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## EVANGELINE: AUCASSIN ET NICOLETE.

TO THE EDITORS OF MOD. LANG. NOTES,

SIRS:—The circumstances that gave rise to

Longfellow's *Evangeline* are recorded,<sup>1</sup> and there can be no doubt that the poet built up his story on the facts as related.

Yet there is a similarity in some of the details between *Evangeline* and the Old-French romance *Aucassin et Nicolette* that may be worth noting, though the two works are, in the main, utterly dissimilar.

The unique manuscript of *Aucassin et Nicolette* is in the National Library at Paris, and this *chanteable*, as it is called, has been edited seven times—in 1809, 1829, 1842, 1856, 1866, 1878, besides one edition without date.

With possibly one exception, there is no similarity of mere expression, and this exception is perhaps the resemblance between the following passages:

*Aucassin et Nicolette*, § I, vv. 1-9:

Qui vauroit bons vers oïr  
 del deport du viel caitif,  
 de deus biaux enfans petis,  
 Nicholette et Aucassins,  
 des grans paines qu'il souffri  
 et des proueces qu'il fist  
 por s'amie o le cler vis?  
 Dox est li cans, biaux li dis  
 et cortois et bien asis.

and *Evangeline*, vv. 16-19:

Ye who believe in affection that hopes, and endures, and is patient,

Ye who believe in the beauty and strength of woman's devotion,

List to the mournful tradition still sung by the pines of the forest;

List to a tale of love in Acadie, home of the happy.

Similarities of plot, on the other hand, are more numerous as we see from the fact that:

In each story the lovers are brought up together in a village.

In each they are separated by capture, being taken away on different ships, though this is not quite clear in *Evangeline*.

In each the lover after the separation makes no effort to seek his sweetheart, though he still loves her dearly.

In each during the separation the maiden is unsuccessfully urged by others to accept another suitor.

In each the maiden sets out to seek her lover and in the end finds him.

In view of the evidence of Hawthorne's

<sup>1</sup> See Hawthorne's *Amer. Note-Book*, Oct. 24, 1833, and Longfellow's *Journal*, Vol. ii, p. 70.